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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - President Bush on CIA Secret
Prisons Iraq - U.S. Middle East Policy
PARIS - Friday, September 08, 2006

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

President Bush on CIA Secret Prisons
Iraq - U.S. Middle East Policy

B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

Le Monde leads with "President Bush Acknowledges Existence of CIA
Secret Prisons" and the editorial, entitled "Bush and the Right of
Law," claims this is the "first time the White House is telling the
truth..." but also acknowledges President Bush made a "concession to

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the right of law" when he announced 14 prisoners "would be transferred to Guantanamo." La Croix's editorial analyzes "The Methods" behind the battle against terrorism contrasting "effectiveness" with "morality" and comments that "while President Bush did not mention the word torture, he did admit to the use of 'harsh' methods..." An inside article in Liberation is entitled "Bush Defends His 'Vital Tool' in the Battle Against Terror." Le Parisien, which carries its second installment on the 9/11 commemorations, includes a small sidebar on the President's announcement and comments that "the transfer to Guantanamo of 14 detainees does not close the debate, even if for the first time the President has acknowledged the existence of CIA prisons..." (See Part C)

Le Figaro carries a short item indicating that "the International Red Cross will return to Guantanamo and will have access to the 14 detainees being transferred from the CIA prisons."

Liberation devotes a two-page report on the proliferation of books, films and websites in the U.S. devoted to the idea that the Bush Administration was somehow involved in the 9/11 attacks, entitled "9/11: Conspiracy As Religion." Laurent Mauriac's report includes organizations such as Scholars for 9/11 Truth but also notes the existence of two government websites dedicated to refuting conspiracy theories, the State Department website and that of the National Institute of Standards and Technology.

All media outlets report on the broadcast of the latest Al-Qaeda video tape. On FR2 this morning the reporter raised the question of "why the broadcast of an obviously old tape to celebrate the 5th anniversary of 9/11, by choice or design?" Radio France Inter noted that "the fact that Bin Laden is still alive is the worst possible failure for the White House." The journalist also focused on the fact that "Bush's dream of a Greater Middle East is in shambles and that the President is increasingly criticized."

Le Figaro says that the head of European diplomacy Javier Solana was "once again snubbed by Iran." "After two cancelled meetings in two weeks... Solana has learned to keep his cool... But he is in effect hostage to the Iranian agenda... He is seen by Teheran as the mouthpiece of Europe and Russia, but especially of the US."

Le Figaro's front page notes that PM Villepin defended France's position vis-à-vis the Middle East yesterday at the National Assembly. Villepin said that "Paris cannot allow Lebanon to become the battlefield for other countries' wars..." Villepin, in direct reference to President Bush's speech also said: "Terrorism cannot be fought with a war, this blight should be eradicated by stopping injustice, violence and conflicts."

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TF1 mentioned FM Douste Blazy's visit to Darfur. The French FM denounced "the humanitarian tragedy that is taking place in the Sudan." He also said that "Khartoum must accept the UN's intervention in order to put a stop to this situation."

Other international stories include the end of the blockade in Lebanon, the transfer of power to the Iraqi army from the U.S. command, (See Part C) and Tony Blair's announcement he will step down within the year. The domestic political battle between presidential election hopefuls Sarkozy and Royal makes the front page of Le Figaro while the economic and financial press devotes their lead to the newly approved Alcatel-Lucent merger and the

conglomerate's new CEO, Patricia Russo. The parliamentary battle over a proposed merger between GDF and Suez is another major domestic story.

The tabloid France-Soir devotes its lead to Brigitte Bardot's appeal to President Bush to "save" Farley C. Matchett from being executed next Tuesday.

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

President Bush on CIA Secret Prisons

"Bush and the Right of Law"

Left-of-center Le Monde in its editorial (09/08): "Those who fight for human rights in the U.S. and elsewhere can rejoice after President Bush's Wednesday speech. He acknowledged the existence of CIA 'secret prisons...' This is the first time since the Washington Post's revelations on the subject that the White House is telling the truth... President Bush made a second concession to the right of law, at least seemingly, when he said 14 detainees would be transferred to Guantanamo... including two alleged masterminds of the 9/11 attacks. According to the Washington Post, Secretary Rice has been at loggerheads with Vice President Cheney to convince President Bush of the need to come clean about the existence of the secret prisons and the need to empty them in order to comply with international law... These clarifications, including those included in the new soldiers' manual regarding interrogation techniques are welcome. But they cannot hide the issue. President Bush has justified the existence of these prisons. But most importantly, he has made concessions about the more scandalous practices used in his 'war against terror' in order to pressure Congress to adopt the legislation allowing Guantanamo detainees to be tried by special courts."

"The Fighting Methods"

Dominique Quinio in Catholic La Croix (09/08): "Democrats are hounded by the question of method in fighting the new threat

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represented by terrorism. In the name of security, which is a perfectly valid reason, what methods can be implemented? Governments have increasingly been taking liberties with (civil) liberties. The outlaw Guantanamo prison ... is a case in point. In recognizing the existence of CIA secret prisons, the U.S. President is confirming the excesses of the fight against terrorism since 9/11. There are two things to take into account: effectiveness and morality. Repeated attacks around the world prove the danger is far from having been eradicated. More importantly, it is to be feared that excessive methods fuel the spirit of vengeance. Regarding morality, the U.S. President did acknowledge the use of 'harsh' interrogation methods... While the temptation on the ground to use certain methods to get information is understandable, directives about certain principle which must not be ignored must come from above."

"Bush Defends His 'Vital Tool' in the Battle Against Terror"

Philippe Grangereau in left-of-center Liberation (09/08): "The President has denied the use of torture... but this applies only to detainees under the authority of the Department of Defense and not suspects incarcerated by the CIA... The President indicated he wanted the 'terrorists' to continue being interrogated in a parallel program..., what the President also called 'alternative procedures.' This euphemism includes different forms of harsh treatment characterized as torture by humanitarian organizations... The U.S. President has justified the use of such methods."

Iraq - U.S. Middle East Policy

"Washington Transfers Control of Iraq's Army to the Iraqis"

Thierry Oberle in right-of-center Le Figaro (09/08): "Four months after taking office, the Iraqi executive will be gradually taking over control of its armed forces... The Iraqi's take over of Abu Ghraib on September 1st was highly symbolic. As for the rest, this transfer of responsibilities will be a long and tricky process... Its rhythm will be determined by the ability of the Iraqi forces to impose themselves in Baghdad and around the country... while at the

moment they seem unable to contain the cycle of violence."

"America's Failed Middle East Policy"

Bernard Guetta on government-run France Inter radio (09/08): "The fact that Bin Laden and most of the 9/11 terrorists were from Saudi Arabia completely changed the landscape of American foreign policy in the Middle East... America understood that it needed to transform its image in the region... Bush was convinced by the neo-conservatives to attack Iraq and free the country from dictatorship... but America forgot that Iraq was divided between ethnic groups and the result has been a failure... While the US has also promoted democratic elections, in Egypt and in the Palestinian territories this has led to the victory of radical Islamists. In the

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end, the US has had to face the fact that: "changes imposed from outside could be as dangerous as the status quo." Today the US no longer has a Middle East policy; it is out of the game." STAPLETON

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